

## Soldiers keep areas in check with VCPs

Story and photo by Sgt. Greg Heath  
4<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment

**NURISTAN PROVINCE**, Afghanistan – For Infantry Soldiers operating in Afghanistan, fighting the War on Terrorism has become less about fighting Anti Coalition Militants face to face, than about trying to root out an enemy and find weapon caches that are often hidden within the country's remote villages.

For the past month, one tactic that the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Soldiers of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 87<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment out of Firebase Catamount in northeastern Afghanistan have found successful has been conducting unpredictable Vehicle Check Points along the main roads passing through villages surrounding the firebase.

In comparison with combat missions being conducted throughout the province as part of Operation Mountain Resolve, the VCP's may seem like a small task, but the 2-87<sup>th</sup> Inf. Soldiers will attest that you can never overlook the small stuff.

"On a scale of one to ten, I'd put (VCP's) up there with any of the other missions," said Cpl. Sean Hurst, B team leader with Outlaw



*A Soldier from Outlaw Platoon, Co. C, 2-87 Inf. checks a vehicle for illegal weapons or materials used to create IEDs during a Vehicle Check Point mission in Nuristan Province.*

platoon of Company C. "They're very important because (the VCP missions) protect all the other forces that are traveling along these roads that may not be as heavily armed as we are. It's preventing anybody from just setting up some kind of ambush sight or remote control Improvised Explosive Device."

The Soldiers often move out from FB Catamount at dusk and set up along the main dirt road that connects all the villages in the area. As they move along the road they look for IEDs before setting up the VCP in an incon-

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## NATO evolving to meet 21st Century threats

Story by John D. Banusiewicz  
American Forces Press Service

**BRUSSELS**, Belgium – NATO is changing to meet the challenges the alliance faces in the 21st century, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said here today.

Rumsfeld met with reporters on the eve of a two-day meeting of NATO defense ministers. "As an institution, we are evolving toward the new threats that exist in the world," he said, "and certainly the NATO countries are deeply involved in the global war on terror in its various elements and manifestations."

The secretary cited the recent terrorist bombings in Turkey and losses by U.S. allies in Iraq and Afghanistan to illustrate the new environment NATO faces. "So NATO is in the process of, to some extent, transforming itself to deal with counterterrorism," he said.

"We've spent the better part of two years recognizing that the security environment of the 21st century has changed," he said, "and that we – our country and our allies and friends – need to acknowledge that fact, and then together talk through how we can best be organized and arranged and equipped to best deter and defend against the more likely threats of the 21st century."

Rumsfeld said the alliance has made "a lot of progress" toward re-

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# World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



*U.S. troops take positions after a roadside explosion near Samarra on Sunday.*

## Ambushers killed in battles with U.S. forces on Sunday

**TIKRIT, Iraq** — U.S. troops fought off two simultaneous attacks on military convoys Sunday in northern Iraq, killing 46 attackers, wounding 18 and capturing eight others, military officials said.

During the gunfights, U.S. tanks crushed makeshift barricades set up by the guerrillas and destroyed three buildings from which the Iraqi fighters were launching attacks.

Some of the attackers appeared to be wearing the black uniforms of the Fedayeen Saddam, a militia loyal to ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, said Master Sgt. Robert Cargie, a spokesman for the Army's 4th Infantry Division.

The convoys carrying military supplies and Iraqi dinars came under attack in Samarra, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of Baghdad, the Army's 4th Infantry Division said.

"This was a coordinated, simultaneous attack," Cargie said, with one convoy being attacked on the east side of the city and the other coming under fire while in the west side of Samarra.

Guerrillas set off improvised explosive devices as the convoys approached, then opened fire from nearby rooftops and alleyways with rifles, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, Cargie said.

Troops from the 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment and U.S. military police responded with a barrage of cannon fire from tanks and armored personnel carriers, Cargie said.

When the attackers put up a makeshift barricade in an attempt to block one convoy, U.S.

armor steamrolled over it, he said.

Five U.S. soldiers were wounded in the simultaneous ambushes, which took place about 1:30 p.m. Sunday (5:30 a.m. EST). Three were hospitalized, but none suffered life-threatening wounds.



*Construction continues on Israel's West Bank barrier.*

## Israelis, Palestinians to sign unofficial "Geneva Accord"

**GENEVA, Switzerland** — Israelis and Palestinians arrived Sunday in Geneva for Monday's scheduled signing of the so-called "Geneva Accord," an unofficial agreement aimed at pushing the Mideast peace process forward.

The plan, which calls for significant concessions on both sides of the Mideast conflict, has no official backing from the Palestinian or Israeli administrations.

It is based on behind-the-scenes work by academics from both sides: Israelis who oppose Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government and Palestinians, some of whom are close to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

Arafat and Sharon have refused to endorse the plan. Internal dissent in Arafat's Fatah Party has prompted four Palestinian officials — including two negotiators who helped draft the agreement — to miss the signing ceremony.

Earlier Sunday, about 100 protesters tried to prevent Palestinian delegates from crossing from Gaza into Egypt on their way to Geneva, witnesses said. The protesters carried Palestinian and Fatah flags and the flag of the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas.

Few politicians are willing to publicly associate themselves with the plan, which seeks to directly address core issues in the Israeli-Palestinian standoff.



*U.S. Soldiers search the debris of two Black Hawk helicopters destroyed November 15.*

## RPG likely caused collision

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — The collision of two U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters that killed 17 American Soldiers two weeks ago probably was caused by a rocket-propelled grenade that hit one of the aircraft, an Army officer said Sunday.

The crash November 15 in Mosul, northern Iraq, was the deadliest single incident for U.S. troops since the Iraq war began.

Col. Joe Anderson said that though the investigation was not conclusive, it appeared that "some form of groundfire" — likely an RPG — hit one of the helicopters, sending it into the path of the other Black Hawk.

"Obviously it was a collision, and it appears that the collision was caused by one of them being hit by something from the ground, probably a rocket," said Anderson, whose 2nd Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division controls Mosul.

All of the Soldiers killed were assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, which is based at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Five Soldiers survived and were flown to Landstuhl, Germany, for treatment.

Anderson said one of the UH-60 Black Hawks was carrying a quick-reaction force in response to a drive-by shooting at a bank in Mosul.

The second helicopter was flying through the area on an unrelated mission, he said.

Reports at the time indicated one helicopter ascended to avoid groundfire, a military source told CNN. "This caused a rotor strike with the second helicopter," the source said.

Residents of the area said one chopper crashed into a school in western Mosul and the other hit a house 250 meters away. No Iraq casualties were reported. A military official said the crash set several buildings on fire.



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spicuous location. Once the checkpoint is set up, the Soldiers stop any vehicles coming through and check them mainly for large caches of weapons or materials that can be used for IEDs, according to Hurst.

"It's a challenging job but go in with the mindset that I have to do a thorough job," said A team leader Sgt. Daniel Marini, Outlaw Plt., Co. C. "You have to keep your eyes open for anything that looks suspicious."

False compartments in the vehicles and men hidden under burqua's are just a few of the things they have to maintain a keen eye for, added Marini.

Although the Soldiers hadn't seen many direct results during the VCPs, they'd received a lot of information from locals as to where they could go and look for caches in villages, according to Hurst.

"We've been given information that has led to several follow-on missions that were suc-

cessful because of the information given," said Hurst.

Along with protecting Soldiers operating in the area, the Soldiers also intend to make the area more secure for the locals by making their presence known through the VCPs.

"It doesn't just benefit us, it also benefits the local population," said Hurst. "We're trying to make them more aware of why we're here but and make things safer for them."

Oftentimes, the VCP teams are accompanied by Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Soldiers who interact with the Afghans and hand out leaflets on mine awareness and ACM wanted posters.

For Hurst, who's been on numerous VCP missions, the missions more often than not go down without incident, but he admits, with the problems Soldiers have faced in Iraq and in parts of Afghanistan being attacked at VCPs, the experience was a bit "nerve racking" at first.

But once they got their feet wet, all they needed to do was fall back on the training they

received back at Bagram Air Base, according to Hurst.

"The training really paid off," Hurst said. "And I'm looking forward to getting back and taking the things we've learned from here and adding that to our training."

He recalled one lesson learned while out on the VCPs, "When it was raining one day we realized it might be a good idea to bring a poncho out so that while we're talking to the local nationals we set up a hooch for them to stay dry," Hurst said. "I want to pass on simple stuff like that; even though we're seaching them, we still want to maintain good relations with them, we want to do any thing can help."

Marini also took another important lesson from the experience.

"All parts of this operation are important and it could be easy to overlook a mission like this, but it is something that could lead to bigger things," he said. "So no matter how small a task is, all of it's important."

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shaping itself. The addition of seven member nations and continued progress in establishing a NATO response force and a chemical and biological battalion are among the steps the alliance has taken in its evolution, he said.

NATO is streamlining its organizational structure, Rumsfeld said, cutting its number of commands from 19 to 11 and attaining a 26- to 27-percent reduction in its headquarters staff on the way to a goal of 30 percent. The U.S. global force structure is part of the equation of NATO's transformation, and concepts with respect to the U.S. "footprint" will be among the topics the defense ministers will discuss, he said.

Rumsfeld emphasized that discussions of concepts concerning the U.S. footprint have been ongoing, not only within the Defense Department, but also with allies and Congress. And he said he expects those discussions to continue.

"It will be a back-and-forth process for many months," he said, until conviction develops on the best way to do things.

"And of course, it's not something the United States can, or should, or even could do unilaterally," he said. "It's the kind of thing that you need to have your friends and allies working with you, so that all those changes and transformations take place together." Congress also needs to be involved, because any changes in the footprint would require shifts and changes in funding, he added.

The secretary said reduced numbers of troops in any given place does not necessarily translate into less capability. When the question came up in a recent meeting he had in Korea, he said, he pointed out that taking five military assets away from 10 looks on the surface to be a 50-percent cut in capability. But if the five remaining assets have four times the capability of any of the 10, the capability really is doubled, he explained.

**Raising the Colors...**

Courtesy Photo

*Lance Cpl. Heath J. Roath, Lance Cpl. Joshua D. Donald, and Sgt. Wellington H. Molina raise the Colors over Camp Bulldog, Bagram Air Base on Thanksgiving Day. They performed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines first colors ceremony since leaving Camp Lejeune N.C.*

## Official: al Qaeda cell is planning something big

Story by Kevin Johnson  
*USA Today*

**WASHINGTON** — A top counterterrorism official says al Qaeda operatives dropped plans this year for several small attacks in the USA to focus on plotting a “more spectacular” assault comparable to the Sept. 11 attacks.

The U.S. counterterrorism official, who has access to all intelligence on the terrorist group, told *USA TODAY* this week that officials have no specific evidence to indicate how or when al Qaeda might try to launch a massive strike on U.S. soil.

But, the official said, interviews with al Qaeda detainees, intercepts of communications from suspected operatives and other sources have yielded evidence that Osama bin Laden’s network still has a command structure and a determination to launch an attack that might rival the suicide hijackings.

About 3,000 people were killed in the Sept. 11 attacks.

“It’s clear that al Qaeda wants to strike here” and that it continues to seek opportunities for “a catastrophic attack,” said the official, who asked not to be identified.

Recent intelligence reports indicate that al Qaeda remains fascinated by the idea of using aircraft as missiles, despite the additional security at U.S. airports since the 9/11 attacks, the official said. U.S. analysts still say explosives typically used in more limited assaults, including vehicle bombs in suicide attacks, remain al Qaeda’s most likely weapon here.

But intelligence reports suggest that some of the network’s operatives think that an attack using chemical or biological weapons could be a way to top the 9/11 attacks, the official said.

Such weapons can be difficult to use, but al Qaeda has sought them for years. It’s unclear whether the group has access to chemical or biological weapons. But those weapons represent a more likely concern than nuclear arms, U.S. analysts say.

The latest intelligence on al Qaeda’s possible intentions comes at a time of heightened tension about terrorism here and around the world.

## Bagram Air Base MWR presents

### “The Spanish Prisoner”

1530Z at the MWR building:  
An employee of a corporation with a lucrative secret process is tempted to betray it. But there’s more to it than that.

Tomorrow’s movie  
“Kingpin: Miniseries”



## Local weather

### TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Tuesday
<b>Bagram:</b>	Partly Cloudy H: 55F L: 27F	Partly Cloudy H: 52F L: 25F
<b>Kandahar:</b>	Mostly Cloudy H: 64F L: 39F	Mostly Cloudy H: 64F L: 37F
<b>Kabul:</b>	Partly Cloudy H: 57F L: 28F	Partly Cloudy H: 54F L: 25F
<b>Uzbekistan:</b>	Rain H: 53F L: 32F	Mostly Cloudy H: 51F L: 28F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

*Freedom Watch* falls under the supervision of the Combined Joint Task Force - 180, and is published daily, Monday - Saturday.

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*Freedom Watch*, an Army newspaper



publication, is produced by the 4<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

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All submissions are subject to editing for size and content by the 4<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment, located in Motel 6, CJTF-180, Bagram Air Base.

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# Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from SI.com)

## Vick can't rally Falcons past Texans



*Michael Vick could only lead the Falcons to two second-half field goals and accounted for 76 total yards.*

**HOUSTON** – Michael Vick's return was less than triumphant.

Domanick Davis ran for two quick touchdowns early in the third quarter and David Carr made his own unplanned appearance Sunday, rallying the Texans to a 17-13 victory Sunday over the Falcons.

It was Vick's first game since fracturing his right leg in the second week of preseason.

"I think I've got my elusiveness back," Vick said. "I have to take my hat off to their defense. They gave me some looks I hadn't seen in a long time. They did their homework and it was just their day."

Vick, the top overall draft choice in 2001 who set an NFL rushing mark for quarterbacks with 1,066 yards over his first two seasons, made his debut with 2:14 remaining in the third quarter. He completed a 9-yard pass to Justin Griffith on his first play, though the drive ended with a punt.

Vick relieved Doug Johnson, who started eight times in Vick's absence. Johnson was 12-of-27 for 116 yards and an interception that cost the Falcons (2-10), who have lost three straight and 10 of 11.

Texans linebacker Jay Foreman was miffed the Falcons didn't start their best quarterback. "At the start we thought he was hurt, then we could see he was throwing on the sidelines and wasn't hurt," Foreman said. "They took the Texans like it was a warmup game, and we took it personal."

## Patriots beats Colts with goal-line stand

**INDIANAPOLIS** – Willie McGinest refused to let a bad knee slow him down Sunday.

With 14 seconds left and the Colts 1 yard away from completing another fourth-quarter rally, McGinest got around the right side of the offensive line and caught Edgerrin James in the backfield to preserve New England's 38-34 win.

The Patriots won their eighth straight game, the longest streak in the NFL, and improved to 10-2 for the first time in franchise history. McGinest's game-saving tackle typified the Patriots' charmed season.

"When it came down to it for the gusto, our guys came with it on the



*Edgerrin James failed on three attempts to score the game-winning touchdown from inside the 5-yard line.*

goal line," said McGinest, who saved the game just two plays after limping off with a knee injury. "That's how you want to win it."

## Warrick saves team from Rhode Island



*Hakim Warrick shot only 6-of-15 from the floor, but was 18-of-22 from the free-throw line.*

**SYRACUSE, N.Y.** – A Hakim Warrick attack saved defending national champion Syracuse from another loss.

Hakim Warrick scored a career-high 30 points Sunday – 11 during a decisive second-half spurt – to help the No. 7 Orangemen rally past Rhode Island 69-65 and avoid an 0-2 start.

"This is only our second game," said Warrick, who was 18-for-22 from the foul line to match the school record set two years ago by Allen Griffin. "Just having a new lineup in there and

losing leadership like Kueth Duany and Carmelo Anthony, it's going to be really tough at first."

The Orangemen, who haven't lost the first two games of a season since the 1968-69 team started 0-5, fell behind by 11 points in the first half and appeared just as uncertain of what they were doing as they did in Wednesday's season-opening loss to Charlotte.

To be certain, the settling influence of Duany, who graduated, and Anthony, now in the NBA, was sorely missed again.

"I think we came out a little too shaky," Warrick said. "We came out kind of hesitant at first, but I think we did a good job of turning it around at the end."

## Sooners tie ND for most No. 1 rankings

(SI.com) – Oklahoma is now No. 1 at being No. 1.

The Sooners tied Notre Dame for the most No. 1 rankings in The Associated Press college football poll, earning their 95th Sunday.

The Sooners (12-0) remained the unanimous pick for the top spot in the rankings after an off week as they prepare for the Big 12 championship game. A win next Saturday against No. 13 Kansas State will give Oklahoma the record to itself.

Ohio State has the third most No. 1 rankings with 73, followed by Miami with 68, and Florida State with 60.

The Sooners, who have been atop each of the 15 polls this season, received all 65 first-place votes in balloting by the panel of sports writers and broadcasters. They are hoping to join Florida State's 1999 team as the only schools to go wire-to-wire since the preseason poll began in 1950.

Oklahoma received the maximum 1,625 points. No. 2 Southern California had 1,555.



# Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

## Kidnapped Turkish engineer released

(VOA News) – A provincial governor in Afghanistan says a Turkish engineer kidnapped by supporters of the ousted Taliban government has been released.

The governor of the southern Afghan province of Ghazni (Assadullah Khan Khalid) says Hasan Onal was set free by his captors, and now is safely in the hands of the Afghan government.

Onal and his driver were abducted Oct. 28 in neighboring Zabul province while working on the key Kabul to Kandahar highway, the main route between the capital and the southern part of the country. The driver was set free the next day with a letter demanding the release of some Taliban prisoners. Onal's release was announced late Saturday by a man who said he was Mullah Rozi Khan, and described himself as a Taliban official. He said the engineer who worked for a Turkish construction company would be released today, mainly because he was a Muslim.

The Taliban official also said the man was freed because the Afghan government had recently released two jailed Taliban members on the occasion of the Eid-al-Fitr holiday, ending the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Afghan officials deny any deal was made for Onal's release.

Remnants of the ousted Taliban have declared a holy war on foreign troops, aid workers and journalists in Afghanistan. The road project on the Kabul to Kandahar highway has been plagued by Taliban attacks.

## Taliban chief Omar 'seen in Pakistan'

(BBC News) – Former Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar was seen in the Pakistani border town of Quetta last week, according to Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Karzai told *The Times* newspaper he had received information that Mullah Omar was spotted praying in a mosque.

There have been no confirmed sightings of him since the Afghan war ended. Mullah Omar is one of the three men most wanted by U.S.-led coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.

As the supreme leader of Afghanistan's deposed regime, he has periodically issued taped messages urging his followers to maintain their attacks on western forces.

The latest reported sighting of the cleric comes nearly two years after the last Taliban stronghold fell to U.S.-backed forces in Afghanistan.

President Karzai told the London-based *Times* newspaper that Quetta was a stronghold for fighters opposing the coalition forces.

He called on Pakistan's President Musharraf to prevent hard-line Islamic groups in the city from supporting those responsible for the recent upsurge in violence in Afghanistan, which has left more than 400 people dead in the past four months.

But Pakistani Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed denied the report of the sighting and said it was "irresponsible".

"There's no truth in this report. We want good relations with Afghanistan. We supported them when they needed our help. We are still supporting them in the fight against terrorism, he told *The Associated Press*.

## Clearing procedures for the M249 weapon

The first step in maintenance is to clear the weapon. This applies in all situations, not just after firing. The automatic rifleman must always assume the M249 AR is loaded. To clear the M249, the automatic rifleman performs the following procedures.

- a. Moves the safety to the FIRE position by pushing it to the left until the red ring is visible.
- b. With his right hand, palm up, pulls the cocking handle to the rear, locking the bolt in place.
- c. While holding the resistance on the cocking handle, moves the safety to the SAFE position by pushing it to the right until the red ring is not visible. (The weapon cannot be placed on safe unless the bolt is locked to the rear.)
- d. Returns and locks the cocking handle in the forward position.

### CAUTION

*When opening the feed cover, make sure the weapon is on the ground away from your face. With the weapon on your shoulder, possible injury could occur if a round goes off when the cover is raised.*

- e. Raises the cover and feed mechanism assembly, and conducts the five-point safety check for brass, links, or ammunition.
  1. Checks the feed pawl assembly under the feed cover.
  2. Checks the feed tray assembly.
  3. Lifts the feed tray assembly and inspects the chamber.
  4. Checks the space between the bolt assembly and the chamber.
  5. Inserts two fingers of his left hand in the magazine well to extract any ammunition or brass.
- f. Closes the cover and feed mechanism assembly and moves the safety to the FIRE position. With his right hand, palm up, returns the cocking handle to the rear position. Presses the trigger and at the same time eases the bolt forward by manually riding the cocking handle forward.

### CAUTION

*The cocking handle must be manually returned to the forward and locked position each time the bolt is manually pulled to the rear.*